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WAR SUFFERERS'
RELIEF BULLETIN

"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"

May, 1946 — Vol. II No. 3

First Steps–The Builders' Unit

By Irvin Horst

This is the story of "the first steps" of the Mennonite Reconstruction and Transport Units in Northwest Europe. However, this account does not begin at the beginning. To do so would be to relate something about the vision and concern of the churches back home and how their leaders planned until reconstruction work has become an actual phase of our relief witness. To go back still further, certainly the Mennonite young men who performed reconstruction work in France, under the Friends following World War I were the forerunners of the present program. In an effort such as this the Lord leads in many lives and in sundry ways so that only in the perspective of time is the vision clarified and the purpose seen.

The rationale for a Mennonite reconstruction program in battle areas in Europe need hardly be entered into, for everyone is acquainted to some extent with the extensive building destruction which accompanied World War II. And yet, reading books and seeing pictures provides only a limited and vague conception of the actual devastation carried out by the various, highly-perfected methods of demolition and the practices of saturation and obliteration bombing. Modern war is not only a Juggernaut which crushes out human life but it is a Gargantuan, soulless robot which steam rollers villages and towns, rips up roads, blasts woods and fields, flings grenades into the least bit of a shelter. Into such areas the Mennonite Reconstruction and Transport Units are being projected to rebuild in a small way in the Name of Christ.

Conference at Roverestein

In the seclusion and quiet of the woods at the Roverestein home for Russian Mennonites more immediate plans for the first unit were laid on March 22. Sam Goering arrived from Basel; Howard Yoder from London; Henry Detwiler from Cairo; and Irvin Horst from Akron. Henry Detwiler reported on his visit to and study of the Friends Reconstruction and Transport unit operating in the Aventino Valley in Italy. Peter Dyck was called in to picture the building destruction in Holland. Charts and maps were relied upon to see the picture in France and Belgium. The vision and concern of the churches and the home office were projected again and again on the minds of the conferees. Prayer was made. Discussion was entered into. Then, walks in the woods. And then, more prayer and discussion. During the morning of the following day it was the feeling of the group that the initial unit should be located in Holland, with a unit in France to follow as soon as possible; that the pattern of the work should be restricted to the repair and rebuilding of homes, with a supplementation of transport to facilitate our own program and assist otherwise as may be thought wise. The plan of action agreed upon at the conference was: (1) Visit areas under consideration in Holland. (2) Contact government officials and receive clearance of plans. (3) Advise M.C.C. on results and make recommendations regarding personnel and equipment. (4) Go to area selected and prepare for operations and reception of unit.

Surveying the Need.

Immediately we set out to survey the three areas under consideration in Holland: Arnhem and vicinity, the island of Walcheren, and the Dutch section of Flanders. In all of these areas Doopsgezinde (Mennonite) congregations are established. This fact provided an excellent entree into these communities. At Arnhem, J. E. Tuininga tucked us into his small English Ford and drove us to a number of villages which had been wrecked by fighting. He was well informed on the extent of the destruction and what had already been done by the government and relief agencies. About nine per cent of the houses in the Arnhem area were either entirely destroyed or very badly damaged.

The second area visited was the drowned island of Walcheren in the province of Zeeland. Here again our first contacts were the Doopsgezinde pastors: A.H.A. Bakker at Middelburg and M. de Boer at Vlissingen. Walcheren guards the northern side of the Scheldt, which is the entrance to Antwerp and other strategic ports, and for this reason was heavily fortified by the Germans. It was captured by the Allies after prolonged bombing, bursting of the dykes, and finally severe attack and fighting. In many sections of the island the destruction of homes is complete, and the complete destruction and severe damage of buildings for the whole of island is sixty-three per cent. The third area visited was Dutch Flanders where a Doopsgezinde church is located at Aardenburg. The pastor of this congregation, M. J. Nolthenius, accompanied us in a survey trip. This area was also heavily contested by the Germans as its shores guard the southern side of the Scheldt. Much destruction exists here but there was no flooding. Destruction of homes in Flanders is fifty-three per cent.

Which of these three areas should be selected as the site of operations in Holland? Arnhem, Walcheren, Flanders all had suffered from building destruction. But Walcheren and Flanders had suffered to a greater extent and had not had opportunity to recover as rapidly as Arnhem. In all three areas Doopsgezinde congregations existed and would welcome our unit and be eager for the fellowship.

(Continued on page 6)

Notes from the Field

War Prisoners Aid and Relief in Belgium

John Thut is nearing the end of his term of service with the War Prisoner Aid of the Y.M.C.A. He has become greatly attached to his work and words of appreciation of his service are heard from the prisoners whom he meets, his coworkers and his superiors. Delmar Wedel is also enjoying his work among the Prisoners of War and has been instrumental in conducting some very helpful services in the camps under his supervision. His work is also greatly appreciated and well spoken of by his coworkers and directors. Wilson Hunsberger, Paul Peachey and I are looking forward to the beginning of distribution of material relief for eastern Belgium. Word was received that the ship, **Jan Van Goyen** was to dock in Antwerp last Wednesday, the 17th, with our first shipment of food and clothing. We hope to move this material soon and begin distribution.—Cleo Mann

Medical Work in Ethiopia

Since February 10 Nancy and I have been working here at Ras Desta Hospital in Addis Ababa. At the present time this is Ethiopia's finest hospital—a 70-bed institution. Three doctors are on the full time staff; an Italian surgeon, a Swedish manager—a real Christian doctor—and I. I take care of the medical cases and the outpatient clinic. We are extremely busy for so much depends on us. Nancy is doing very well with the nursing angle and really works much harder than I. All I need do is make the diagnosis and order the medications and then it becomes her duty to go through the complicated procedures of carrying them out. Edith Lehman is helping us out in the hospital and we plan to spend at least an hour in language study each day with my interpreter. All is not lovely here—no, we have our problems. We certainly need your prayers for patience and for Christian love that will motivate our every thought and activity. Our living is good and from the Government officials we are getting more than the best of consideration. Still we look forward to our own hospital in Nazareth. We can hardly wait. We work in Addia, but our hearts are in Nazareth. Paul Conrad, M.D.

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Thinking about Relief

The feature article of this issue of the WAR SUFFERERS' RELIEF BULLETIN, "First Steps," was written by the former editor of this publication, Irvin Horst. Since his arrival in Europe, Brother Horst with Henry Detwiler has been doing work preliminary to the establishment of a Builders and Transport Unit in Northwest Europe. As we go to press the first unit of eleven men, ten of them recently discharged from C.P.S., is ready to sail for Holland. Among them are carpenters, masons, mechanics and office workers. They go with a deep conviction of the importance of the task which they are about to begin, and with a vision of the great opportunity which they will have for a Christian witness. To them this service is the positive aspect of the peace testimony which during their stay in Civilian Public Service they lived negatively in refusing to take up arms against fellow human beings. Now as the opportunity is presented, they go out to do their bit in repairing the damage inflicted by the war machine in which they refused to take any part.

As Christians we naturally look to the Word of God for a scriptural basis for our service. We find that the prophet Isaiah, in admonishing God's people as to the kind of worship with which He was most pleased, referred to a worship of service which is identical with our relief work today. In the fifty-eighth chapter Isaiah writes: (Moffatt's translation)

It is to share your food with hungry men,
and take the homeless to your home,
To clothe the naked when you see them,
and never turn from any fellow-creature.
Then shall light dawn for you,
with healing for your wounds;

He will refresh you in dry places,
and renew your strength,
Till you are like a watered garden,
like an oasis with a steadfast spring.
Your sons shall build once more the ancient ruins,
and old foundations you shall raise again;
You shall be called the repairer of ruins,
the restorer of wrecked homes.

In the above scripture passage are mentioned what have been called the two phases of relief work; emergency relief and rehabilitation. During the past winter the first phase of relief was administered in Holland. The food and clothing so liberally contributed by the Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in America and distributed by our own M.C.C. workers have done much to save many from cold and hunger. Letters from the Dutch Mennonites indicate the deep gratefulness with which they received these gifts from their brethren in America. Their emergency needs have been met, but there are thousands who yet have no homes and are living in miserable shacks, in holes and caves, and in abandoned defences built in sand dunes. They have been stripped of their tools and materials for rebuilding and are thus at the mercy of others who can supply these things. Now is the time to enter upon the second phase of relief—a longer term program of reconstruction, repairing the ruins and restoring the wrecked homes. Young men who are definitely concerned about this service and consecrated to it will find here an unlimited opportunity of supplementing the peace testimony which they lived during the war.

In China, there is approximately one physician to 40,000 persons and one hospital bed to about 10,000 persons. China has never developed a "minimum adequate health service."—Chinese News Service.

"If I have eaten my morsel myself alone, if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." from Job 31:16-22.

PEACE PRIORITIES

I planned an ultramodern home when priorities were lifted. . . .
But a Belgian woman whispered, "I have no home at all!"
I dreamed of a country place for luxurious week-ends. . . .
But a Jewish lad kept saying, "I have no country!"
I decided on a new cupboard right now. . . .
But a child of China cried out, "I have no cup!"
I started to purchase a new kind of washing machine. . . .
But a Polish woman said softly, "I have nothing to wash!"
I wanted a quick-freezing unit for storing quantities of food. . . .
But across the waters came the cry, "I have no food!"
I ordered a new car for the pleasure of my loved ones. . . .
But a war orphan murmured, "I have no loved ones!"

—Mayme Garner Miller
(in **World Call**)

Hospitality in a Dutch Home

By Welma Graber

Come with me this week! Our team of clothing distributors is going to the Hague for a distribution there and I'm sure you will appreciate the opportunity of living in a Dutch Mennonite home.

On Monday morning the truck is loaded with relief goods, suitcases, and bicycles. After the usual, "Have a good week, girls," from our director we leave from our Murillostraat 6 M.C.C. home. In an hour or hour and a half we reach our destination and spend the day unpacking bales and laying out our clothing in preparation for the week's work of distribution. By evening we begin to think about a place to call "home" because we're a bit tired and hungry for a warm meal. Presently a kind soul comes to take each one of us to our respective homes. It is interesting to note that each of the "American Dames" is sent to a different home because these folks seem to consider it rather a novel experience to entertain us. My guide and I both ride our bikes for at least two miles and arrive at the designated address. My hostess doesn't speak English, neither does her husband; but by this time that is not too unfortunate. We get along fairly well with the Dutch we've been able to learn in four months' time plus the help of a **Klein Engels Woordenboek.**

I am asked to remove my wraps and invited into the living room. Almost before I am seated my hostess offers me a cup of tea. This is so customary a gesture that if it isn't done I feel like something is missing. Then there is another interesting thing about the cup of tea. They ask me if I like it with sugar and milk and I reply "neither"—which is a surprise. Convinced that I do like tea best "straight" they serve it to me with a small wafer and we sit to chat a bit. The living room is quite comfortable and the small stone on the hearth is sending out a little heat. If the temperature in the room goes to 60 degrees Fahrenheit or above, the room is considered too warm. There are flowers in the windows and on the table. Modern methods of forcing flower bulbs make it possible for folks to have tulips and other spring flowers in their homes during the entire winter. Another thing one notices almost at once upon entering the living room is the pictures on the walls. These folks have an appreciation for good art that is evidenced by many paintings and plaques about the home. The floor is covered with a reed or straw mat and a worn rug or carpet. On the table there is a dark heavy cloth made of some type of drapery material. The light fixture is most interesting, hanging low from the ceiling; so low in fact that a Dutchman usually has to stoop to walk under it. The large lamp shade is draped with a ruffled strip of cloth around a round or square metal frame.

After the cup of tea and a little visit we have the evening meal which usually consists of potatoes, meat (if available), some vegetable and perhaps a pudding for dessert.

The evening is spent in further introducing ourselves, our work, and our families. The map of North America is brought out and the exact spots where the M.C.C. is located and where we live are pointed out. They like to see photos of our families, homes, and churches. More than this we have tea again—the "unavoidable" cup of tea! Bedtime comes and we are shown to our rooms. We make it our business to bring our own sheets and blankets with us because bedding is a very scarce article. The bedroom is not warmed as a rule and the faster we can get under the covers, the better. Often there is a nice warm spot in the bed because the hostess has placed a metal jug of warm water there. You would have to know how it feels to climb into a cold damp bed without being warmed to realize what a luxury this is. They offer to call me for breakfast but I usually have my "vekker" with me and save them the trouble. As soon as I make my appearance in the living room in the morning I must again have a cup of tea. Breakfast soon follows which consists of bread and tea. My lunch of bread is ready and off to the distribution center I go—to return again in the evening for a warm meal.

Far more important than these physical aspects of the Dutch home is the kind hospitality and "homey" atmosphere that we find as we live with them. It is easy to feel at home with these folks because of the fact that they are a home-loving people, stressing the home life more perhaps than does the average American family.

Echoes from China

"Nan Min"

The literal meaning of the Chinese characters for refugee, **nan-min**, is "people in distress." Conditions under which they have traveled and lived during the years away from home and while they are returning to homes that have been destroyed by armies and flood surely merit the name. The big refugee movements have begun, now that winter is over. They are moving by the hundreds of thousands on the roads, rivers, and railroads. Everywhere carts, busses, trains, inns, and eating places are packed with great masses of people in distress but with hopes of a safe homecoming.

Chinese refugees seem to be common, ordinary people once you know them. Some are poor, some middle class, and some have plenty of money. They carry along with them wherever they go probably all of their earthly possessions. These include bedding and a few cooking utensils. Anywhere they can spread their bedding and light a fire under their kettle can be their temporary home, and they seem content enough.

Within the refugee scheme CNRRA gives the official stamp which allows free railway rides, shelter, and food. Three FAU men and myself were put to work in the Chengchow camp until the CNRRA group came to take over. I was in charge of the food so can give you some idea of the menu. Two meals a day are served. They consist of bread (UNRRA flour), cabbage, turnips, millet, onions, oil, and salt. In spite of a small kitchen, by a system of food tickets over 300 refugees could be served in less than half an hour.

With such throngs of refugees one feels that there is no organization which can adequately meet the tremendous problems of transportation, food, shelter and health. It is hard to decide just where a relief organization like ours fits in, but one feels that they need a little of the Christian spirit to make things run more smoothly and some "salt" for seasoning. —Clayton Beyler

East Honan

A cold twenty-hour trip that formerly took one and one-half hours, plus an on-schedule ride in a comfortable train, brought me to East Honan to investigate conditions there. This tour brought me many interesting contacts with church leaders and others who were interested in the plight of some of their neighbors. Since I was one of the first missionaries to return and since I came as a representative of relief organizations, my reception was most cordial. I stopped at some of our own mission stations also and this led me into Communist territory. A missionary coworker helped in getting past the Communist guards, though their inspection left me minus my flashlight.

Chinese Communists now rule about six provinces. Middle class and wealthy people are forced to give up much of their land and share it with the poor. Some of them naturally go elsewhere. Missionaries or Christian workers are not restricted but indirectly they are hindered, or at least they are annoyed, in many ways, so that one cannot speak of real liberty.

The East Honan people have made urgent requests for relief. Some, such as old people or orphans will have to be helped by direct grants so that food and fuel may be purchased. However, where there are able-bodied men, a system of loans has been worked out by which men with land or skill will be able to borrow sufficiently to buy tools or work animals or possibly seed, and so support themselves and at the end of two years repay the loan. An interesting feature in this land of rapidly changing money values, is that the loans are made and repaid on the basis of the price of wheat. Refugees who are returning home after years of absence are given food, and shelter, and sometimes medical care along the way.—P. P. Baltzer

Location of M.C.C. Workers

Our M.C.C. workers have also all assisted in the work of the Honan International Relief Committee. As you know, S. F. Pannabecker and P. P. Baltzer were specifically loaned to the American Advisory Committee to serve for them in Honan, the former as Field Director and the latter as Area Supervisor in east Honan. Wilhelmina Kuyf has assisted in office work at headquarters and has been assigned other work as that recently when 395 bales of army and civilian clothing arrived. Clayton Beyler has had various jobs—refugee feeding, Yellow River laborers welfare work, field trips. Lawrence Burkholder in addition to attending to M.C.C. business in Shanghai assists at the A.A.C. head office.—S. F. Pannabecker.

FIRST STEPS

(Continued from first page)

After summarizing our observations, consulting with relief agencies, Doopsgezinde pastors, and government officials, it was decided that Walcheren should be the place. Walcheren—the erstwhile, picturesque island of farmer villages and fishing towns, which had received death from the sky, sea, and land and had been drowned by the sea—this was to be the place an eleven-man, Mennonite reconstruction unit would repair homes and lay bricks in the Name of Christ.

Contacting the Government

The next step was to contact government officials and tell them the story of Mennonite relief and reconstruction, who the Mennonites were, why they wanted to serve on Walcheren Island in the Name of Christ. Our way for this task was prepared by the excellent witness which has gone out through the efforts of Mennonite Relief in Holland in the distribution of clothing and food. Holland has a manpower shortage, especially of artisans, and so the unit was welcomed from that standpoint. It seems it is difficult to send workmen to some of the more outlying regions of Holland and so the selection of Walcheren was approved. Materials are limited and very scarce, but repairing and rebuilding of homes has a high priority. At the central office in The Hague we found an appreciation of our motives and gestures of co-operation were made. An eleven-man unit was indeed very small in the over-all program of reconstruction in Holland—but they were carpenters and bricklayers building for peace in the Name of Christ.

We now had government approval of our unit for Walcheren and a signal of co-operation. The next step would be to report to Akron and make recommendations of personnel and equipment. Back to Roverestein we went again, and again, more thought, prayer, walks in the woods.

Choosing a Center.

The fourth step and the one in which we are immersed at present—if I may mix my metaphors—pertains to the more specific details of locating the exact village in which our unit would effectively operate and the working out of details in regard to living quarters, project supervision, rations, transport, and a number of other things, we spent a week in Walcheren. Along a canal we found a small village, Groote Abeele, which seemed the right size for our unit and there was a partly-wrecked hotel for the unit to reside in, and if the hotel would not be available we probably could arrange for a houseboat on the canal. Groote Abeele appealed to our hearts—and to our imaginations. But Groote Abeele was close by Middelburg and government workers preferred to labor in towns near large cities. Later we found Boudewijnskerke (pronounced: Bauw-de-vains-kerk-e). This village is located in a more remote part of the island, is a farmers' village, has been badly damaged, and reconstruction has not yet been started. This was a village in need in which other laborers preferred not to work. It was decided that Boudewijnskerke should be the place. Then, followed the working out of details many of which are important but not so interesting to relate—arrangements for billeting and messings, how building materials would be made available, rations of benzine (gasoline), oil, and auto parts, the operation of vehicles, supervision of the project, etc., etc.

So, the work has begun—barely begun, for the unit of eleven men has not yet arrived. The work thus far, we trust, has been part of a good foundation for the project which is to follow. An endeavor was made to lay the foundation according to the will of God. "For no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is laid, that is, Christ Jesus Himself. And whether one uses gold or silver or costly stone in building on the foundation, or wood or hay or straw, the quality of everyone's work will appear, for the Day will show it. For the Day will break in fire, and the fire will test the quality of everyone's work." I Cor. 3:11-13 (Goodspeed).

Medical Work in India.

I've been in Dhamtari ten days now, and feel quite veteranized. I've been to four stations and treated almost 500 patients, and when they come for treatment they really need it. India seethes with political unrest. It also reeks with disease, dirt, deceit, immorality, amorality and lasciviousness. Bribes speak with regularity. My first impression was—what's the use? Nothing can cure this festering sore. The need for education and spiritual food is so great that with my limited vocabulary I cannot describe it.—Dr. Dana Troyer

Peace Notes

Selective Service Extended

On May 14, only a few hours before the Selective Service Act was to expire, the Senate passed the bill to extend the draft for a six weeks period. Amendments were attached to the bill, exempting fathers, 18 and 19-year-olds, and men over 30, from future inductions. (This does not mean that fathers and teen-age youths who are now in camp will be released immediately.)

This extension is obviously only a temporary solution. Before July 1 Congress must make the decision whether to end the draft or to continue it still further. These six weeks will give time for both sides on the question to put forth new efforts and arguments. Probably the outcome will depend in part on the various political factors which at the present cannot be clearly foreseen.

* * *

Release of British C.O.'s

Recently a bill has been passed in England, providing that Conscientious Objectors in England are to be released when all men and officers in the corresponding army groups (based on age and length of service) have been released.

However, since many of the C.O.'s have been engaged in essential civilian work, they are subject to the Essential Work Order, which is still in effect. In practice this means that many (though not all) of the Conscientious Objectors in England will be retained in their work despite their release from draft status.

* * *

International Abolition of Conscription

Religious bodies . . . . have called for an effort by the United States to seek the abolition of conscription by international agreement. It will be said by many that it is utterly senseless for the United States to advance such a proposal at the present time. Maybe so, but how does anybody really know until an honest effort has been made along this line. It's better to run the risk of being foolish than it is to rush headlong into a new race in arms that can only mean the further impoverishment of an already impoverished world, to say nothing of the risk to peace that would be involved if a new race in arms were to go forward in this atomic age. What mankind is looking for today is a statesmanship that will rise above the level of conventional diplomacy, a statesmanship that will be creative, and unafraid, a statesmanship that will run the risk of being dubbed "foolish" in the hope that such "foolishness" might confound the cynicism and disillusionment of those who profess to see nothing more in the future than the repetition of those politics which, in the past, have brought tears and suffering and two world wars to the people of the earth.—Walter Van Kirk.

* * *

Send us Wheat or Men, Asks General MacArthur

General MacArthur last month appealed for "more wheat or more soldiers," according to Secretary of Agriculture Clinton P. Anderson. He quoted the general as saying he would need more men to handle food riots which would result if the wheat was not forthcoming.

Commenting on criticism received for sending wheat to Japan, Mr. Anderson pointed out that it is cheaper to send the food. Every American soldier requires 5,000 calories a day, while Japanese civilians are getting less than 1,000 a day.—**The C.O.**, April, 1946 issue.

* * *

Crime follows war

Citizens of Sidney, Australia, are deeply concerned about the same sort of crime wave mounting there as in other parts of the world. A leading police official attributes the rapid increase of crime to the fact that many young people were sent to war and trained to kill, and have now been discharged; he also expresses the belief that youths lacking in proper home training appear to develop criminal tendencies under training for war. Another factor is the smuggling of wartime guns into the country. **(Worldover Press.)**

* * *

Intolerance Increases

Public-opinion surveys show an alarming rise in hostility toward racial and religious groups. One unpublished opinion pool indicates that thirteen percent of the people polled would join a hate campaign against Jews, and an additional twelve per cent are undecided . . . . but think it might settle the problem. Eleven per cent of those polled think that Negroes are a menace to America and would support a hate campaign against them.—Selected

M.C.C. Centers and Personnel

PARAGUAY 19

Comite Central Mennonita
25 de Noviembre 371
Asuncion, Paraguay

PUERTO RICO 40

Mennonite Sub-Unit
LaPlata Project
Aibonito, Puerto Rico

ITALY 12

UNRRA Italian Mission
APO 394, c-o Postmaster
New York, New York

ETHIOPIA 5

Mennonite Hospital
Nazreth (Hadama)
via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

INDIA 6

c-o Lee Memorial Mission
13 Wellington Square
Calcutta

CHINA 15

Hua Mei Hospital
Chengchow, Honan

ENGLAND 10

68 Shepherds Hill
London, N. 6

FRANCE 16

Secours Mennonite aux Enfants
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